

Jonah Thompson's Houses
"Twin or "Married Houses"
211 N. Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia

HABS No. VA-251

HABS
VA

7-ALEX,

57-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Present Owner: Mrs. Herbert E. Marshburn

Present Occupant and Use: Apartments

Description

Brick, Flemish bond, Georgian style. This is one of the superlative buildings of Alexandria and though sadly abused and bereft of much of its original woodwork, remains one of the most interesting and appealing structures to be found. It consists of two houses joined by a hyphen and entrance court. The front building is monumental in scale, with a pair of unusual arched doorways of Aquia stone. That to the south originally gave access to a three story addition or lean-to which extends the entire depth of the two units, subject to an adjustment to match the reduced height of the back building. The facade facing the river is one of classic beauty with arcaded gallery executed in stone. The designer of the building made liberal use of Aquia stone, though delicate carving such as capitals and keystones may be composition stone. The entrance hall contains an elaborate ornamental plaster cornice and ceiling medallion. The stairway is probably the finest in Alexandria. Doors of unusual width were detailed to give the impression of double leaves.

Number of stories: 3-rear building, 2 with basement.

Historical Data

Year of erection: Street front probably in 1790's, rear building may have been earlier.

Built for (first owner): Jonah Thompson

Architect: Unknown

Notable events and occupants

Home of Jonah Thompson, an important citizen of Alexandria and prosperous business man. Thompson was shipping, banker, and large property owner. No clue has been located as to why he built in the manner found. All documentary references treat this property as one structure.

References: Gay Montague Moore, Seaport in Virginia, Richmond, 1949. Chap. 3
HABI form, prepared by T. Russell Jones and Worth Bailey, HABS
National Park Service.

Approved

Dick Sutton
Chief Architect

Date

Feb. 16, 1957

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Supplementary Data

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Valuable photographic references to this building have come to light in N.W. Elwell, Architecture, Furniture and Interiors of Maryland and Virginia, Boston, 1897 in Plates XX and LIV. (inadvertently reversed in the publication).

These illustrations show the building stuccoed across the front facade and marked to resemble stone. This treatment occurred across the front only and probably dated from the time of the lean-to addition. These same illustrations are of importance also in establishing the original state of the twin doorways, also the design of the roof balustrades.

Worth Bailey
January 23, 1959